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“Social physical exercise?” Football, industrial paternalism, and professionalism in west Dunbartonshire, Scotland, c. 1870-1900

Matthew L. McDowell
University of Edinburgh

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Abstract

This article examines the interrelationship of sport, community, and industry in west Dunbartonshire during the period 1870-1900. During the early years of the Scottish Football Association (SFA) – the 1870s and 1880s – the county’s main football clubs were amongst the SFA’s most dominant, regularly challenging Glasgow’s major clubs for supremacy in the Scottish Cup. These clubs were part of an industrial landscape, based as they were in shipbuilding and textile communities significantly comprised of Irish and Highland Scottish migrant populations. Local industrialists acted as patrons out of a paternalistic desire to mould the message of football. Their attempts were nevertheless undermined by the existence of professionalism in the game, which in turn encouraged an alternative method of social mobility.

Introduction

It is largely believed that association football is the favourite sport of the Scottish industrial working class.¹ This is especially the case for the west of Scotland; where, from the 1870s onwards, the game was largely acknowledged to be one of the major cultural activities of working-class urban males.² Most previous research has examined the “Old Firm” rivalry of Glasgow’s Celtic and Rangers Football Clubs, two extraordinary sporting organisations which purportedly reveal the ethno-religious divisions of modern Scotland.³ While one does not dispute the dominance of Celtic and Rangers over the post-1900 Scottish game, examining the formative years of Scottish football and its institutions – the period 1870-1900 – tells a very different tale, in which Glasgow clubs struggled in challenge cup competitions against strong sides from outside the city. The dominant county of pre-1890 football was Dunbartonshire, whose three major clubs – Vale of Leven, Renton, and Dumbarton – were highly successful in the first two decades of the Scottish Cup, and in the inaugural campaigns of the Scottish Football League (SFL).⁴ Most club members were employed in

local calico works or shipyards, with clubs receiving non-managerial patronage from local industrial elites; and thus, within west Dunbartonshire, the presence and popularity of football can be used as a case study in the relationship between male work, leisure, workplace politics, and migration. To that end, this article will examine these three clubs in the context of their respective industrial communities. Firstly, it will examine the “origins” of codified football in Dunbartonshire, as well as the industries and the demographics of the communities where it flourished. Secondly, this piece will critically analyse how local paternalistic industrialists used sport to advance a moral ethos on the supposed purpose of recreation. These attempts, however, met with some degree of indifference, and reflected the internal divisions within Dunbartonshire’s workforce. To that end, this article additionally examines how British football’s professionalism allowed Dunbartonshire’s working class an escape route from discriminatory workplaces and political cultures, even if it ultimately signalled the end of the region as a footballing power.

West Dunbartonshire, 1870-1900

Football’s popularity in Dunbartonshire, as well as the success of local clubs, crested with the high water mark of industry. Prior to 1870, the most popular team sport in the region was the ball-and-stick game shinty.⁵ The first recorded match in the region took place in February 1852 between the two calico works owned by the brothers Alexander and John Orr-Ewing.⁶ At the outset of the 1870s, the game was still encouraged by the factory owners; in March 1870, the two rival works played each other in front of a crowd of two thousand people in Alexandria.⁷ Glasgow’s Queen’s Park FC (QP) – formed in 1867 – provided an exhibition of the “new” game of association football in Alexandria in August 1872, with their opposition formed from a group of local shinty players.⁸ After the match, these players formed the Vale of Leven Rugby and Athletic Club. Meanwhile, in Dumbarton, another group of shinty players formed Dumbarton Football Club in December 1872

after a similar match against QP.⁹ For a time, these teams, along with Renton FC (also founded in 1872) were considered two-sport athletic clubs.¹⁰ This is a part of local football lore, though. It is questionable that QP's presence alone was responsible for introducing "football" into the region, and Vale of Leven's original existence as a "rugby" club may indicate that a hybrid "football" tradition had already developed. Shinty never recovered from the association game's proliferation.¹¹ Football, on the other hand, went from strength to strength. Vale of Leven, Renton and Dumbarton were the most dogged opposition faced by QP in the nascent Scottish Cup competition. While talented working-class footballers from Ayrshire and Renfrewshire migrated to the riches of English football, their clubs struggled to win national trophies during the early years of the Scottish Football Association (SFA).¹²

Vale of Leven, Renton, and Dumbarton FCs were based on the River Leven, which ran between the River Clyde at Dumbarton and Loch Lomond at Balloch. From the mid-nineteenth century up to the early-twentieth century, Dumbarton and the Vale saw the growth of the shipbuilding and calico industries respectively, as well as the accompanying influx of migrant labour. Dye and print works had long existed in the Vale of Leven, and the villages of Renton and Alexandria were established to house their employees. Technological changes in the early-nineteenth century, along with the opening of imperial markets, by 1850 had allowed turkey red dyeing to become the dominant process on which the print works were built.¹³ From 1890 onwards, however, low wages, which helped to fuel the industry, were not enough to guarantee profitability, as competition from the United States and India began to hammer the Vale. William Stirling & Sons, the Renton works of Alexander Wylie, and the Alexandria works of the Orr-Ewing brothers, were forced to merge in 1897 under the United Turkey Red Company, with other works being taken over by the Manchester-based Calico Printers Association. In the wake of these mergers came

redundancies: the number employed by the United Turkey Red Company was halved from around 6,000 to 3,000 by World War I.¹⁴

At the same time in Dumbarton, many newcomers to the region arrived to work in the royal burgh's shipyards. Up to the 1830s, the only major employer in the town was the glassworks, which then shut down. In 1844, however, the first shipyard of William Denny & Co. opened.¹⁵ By 1858, the initiation of a direct rail link between Glasgow and Balloch, with Dumbarton and Clydebank in between, ensured greater integration with Glasgow's major industries. Dumbarton was further up the Clyde from Glasgow, with a wider harbour and easier access to the Atlantic Ocean. At the end of the 1860s, the yards of both the Denny brothers and Archibald MacMillan were among the first in the world to build ships with iron and steel hulls.¹⁶

Dunbartonshire's major football clubs first appeared on the radar at a time of economic change within the county; and, accordingly, migration had a considerable effect in moulding football's regional culture. The population of Dunbartonshire more than doubled from 54,179 residents in 1861, to 113,865 in 1901. Dumbarton itself doubled in size during this period: from 8,268 in 1861 to 20,068 in 1901. So too did the Vale: Renton went from 2,891 in 1861 to 5,067 in 1901, and Alexandria from 4,242 in 1861 to 8,007 in 1901.¹⁷ At any given time during the period, arrivals from Argyll, Stirlingshire, and Scotland's northern counties comprised roughly 13% of those present in the Vale of Leven, and numbered roughly at one-tenth of Dumbarton's residents. The Irish were numerically greater, comprising roughly one-fifth of the population of Dumbarton and the Vale during the period, with the heaviest concentration of Irish males in Renton.¹⁸

Leisure and the labour hierarchy

The Vale of Leven has already been used as a case study within Scottish labour history: by Macintyre, Gallacher, and Rawlinson and Robinson. These works focus on the post-1910 period,

and ostensibly tell a narrative of textile workers who arose from their collective slumber to fight increasing economic marginalisation.¹⁹ Reflecting a wider pattern within the Scotland's historiography against labour history, these studies are now fairly dated. It has now been over a decade since the most relevant texts to this period of Scottish labour history, specifically those of Knox, Macdonald, and Campbell, have been written.²⁰ While there have been recent texts, such as that of Kenefick, and article-sized contributions by Maver, Mackenzie and Siméon, labour history has seemingly taken a backseat to the "national" question within recent historiography.²¹

The relationship of work and employment to sport, however, is crucial here. In the early years of organised association football, clubs, as social organisations which represented constituencies within regional society, were sometimes given a boost by local elites in the form of non-managerial patronage. In the west of Scotland, capitalists based within the industrial communities of footballers would provide clubs with sporting grounds and changing facilities at their own expense.²² During this time, clubs in industrial locales were doomed to endure short existences without private grounds, as well as the access to capital to be able to afford one.²³ Free grounds, then, were not an insignificant advantage for fledgling teams. Renton, Vale of Leven and Dumbarton were not works-centred clubs: patronage was a personal matter for these local elites, as a gift to their communities. Nothing in the records of the United Turkey Red Company and its constituent enterprises shows any corporate expense or interest in sport.²⁴ This emphasises the degree to which Dunbartonshire's employers had considerable regional influence. It is entirely possible that, as with Greenock Morton FC in Renfrewshire, requests for support from these elites came from the players themselves.²⁵ This was reflective of both the workplace fraternalism and associational culture of certain Scottish trades, as well as the "class collaborationist values" espoused between Protestant employers and their Protestant skilled workers.²⁶ Pre-existing group

relationships between employers and their charges were re-contextualised in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Scotland, when an increased male franchise furthered the necessity of employers to keep Protestant workers on side, in the face of perceived threats by socialism and Irish Catholicism.²⁷ Skilled workers' social circles accordingly froze Catholics out: Duncan believes that friendly societies and other organisations were therefore marks of internal "disunity" within the Scottish working class.²⁸

In the period after 1910 the Vale of Leven increasingly became known as a region of considerable trade union militancy, but previously the opposite was the case, with the prevalent perception of the Vale's workforce being one of "docility".²⁹ Different trades within the dye works negotiated separately, and often directly, with the firms.³⁰ The local Trades Council was formed in 1898, and a local co-operative had existed since the 1860s, but these were largely for skilled workers, and were encouraged by Wylie himself.³¹ Red Clydesider and future Secretary of State for Scotland Thomas Johnston stated as late as 1929 that: "the Vale of Leven... [has] a semi-serf tradition which paralyses to this day any local effort towards class freedom and human dignity".³²

The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was nowhere to be seen in Dunbartonshire parliamentary elections up to 1914, and would not run in the Kilmarnock Burghs constituency (including Dumbarton, Kilmarnock, Renfrew, Port Glasgow, and Rutherglen) until 1911.³³ In the Vale's case, this was in stark contrast to parliamentary and municipal politics in other textile communities in the west of Scotland; Paisley, for instance.³⁴ An angry letter by "A Unionist" in the 15 November 1893 *Dumbarton Herald* ruefully described the employment hierarchy of Renton, where "employer and foremen seemed to vie with each other in denouncing Trades-Unionism." Anti-Catholic discrimination within skilled work was a serious impediment to trade union organisation in Scotland.³⁵ A good percentage of sports clubs in Scotland's central belt during the

period were “artisanal”, rather than unskilled.³⁶ When John Madden, the first Catholic to play for Dumbarton FC, made his debut in November 1886, he faced initial hostility from his club members and supporters.³⁷ A club receiving patronage from the Dennys would not necessarily have had an inclusive attitude towards Catholics: the Orange Order was a major cultural force on the Denny yards, and the firm stopped employing Catholics in 1855 after its Protestant workers rioted.³⁸

This particular brand of paternalism became crucial in maintaining artisanal support for Liberalism in Scotland. Provision for leisure, inside or outside spheres of work, was part of this social contract.³⁹ But, like the Bairds of Gartsherrie in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, Conservative employers were also keen to patronise working-class sport.⁴⁰ There was considerable working-class support for the Tories – especially within shipyards and coal mines – which went hand-in-hand with Orangeism.⁴¹ Wylie, Gilmour and the Dennys were all Liberals who turned to Unionism after Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone’s about-face in support of Irish Home Rule in 1886. The Conservative Archibald Orr-Ewing served as MP for Dunbartonshire from 1869 to 1892. Wylie then carried on the Unionist standard for the county, serving in Parliament from 1895 to 1906.⁴² Lt. Col. John McAusland Denny represented the Kilmarnock Burghs during the same years as Wylie, with his 1895 campaign slogan – “Ho, away! Play up, Dumbarton!” – being appropriated from the local football team (*Lennox Herald*, 27 July 1895).⁴³

Beyond their immediate ethno-religious and political context, Dunbartonshire’s football clubs followed similar patterns of paternalism to those within Scotland and the rest of the UK. These clubs, in their success at reaching Scottish football’s highest levels can be viewed as precursors to West Ham United FC, originally based in the Thames Ironworks of its patron, Arnold Hills, another British industrialist who was passionate about rational recreation.⁴⁴ Knox certainly views attempts by Scottish industrialists to introduce rational recreational programmes as part of a

concerted drive to push working-class leisure towards “respectable” pursuits.⁴⁵ The existence of paternalism here does not indicate that football’s popularity in Dunbartonshire was a top-down conspiracy.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in the case of Dunbartonshire, as well as West Ham, local employers viewed the provision of sport as an extension of their social duty towards their skilled workforces. One can determine this both through their writings, and through contemporary biographies and newspaper accounts of these men.

The case of Wylie is especially instructive here, as he invoked co-operative pioneer and New Lanark founder Robert Owen to describe his own philosophy in workforce governance.⁴⁷ Owenite paternalism was a product of late-Enlightenment discourses on how best to mitigate the negative effects of industry upon workers, and was typically enacted within the context of purpose-built “model villages”.⁴⁸ Such paternalism, while seemingly well-intentioned in its attempts to create a more humane industrial culture, was still a regime imposed from above, a concerted attempt to a guard against more radical forms of socialism.⁴⁹ Wylie believed that collective ownership and trade unionism penalised workers, if the ultimate goal was in “the working man becoming his own capitalist”.⁵⁰ The workers, Wylie asserted, were “incapable of united action by themselves”, and needed “the strong guidance of the capitalist, or, to use the good old-fashioned word, ‘the master’”.⁵¹

Paternalism and regional sport

Sources of the period left little doubt that many of the footballers in Dumbarton and the Vale were workers within local industries. Wylie himself, in a speech to the Scottish Clerks’ Association in 1890, noted that Renton FC were comprised mainly of men from his works, representing different occupations, from manual labourers to clerks.⁵² The *Scottish Athletic Journal* stated on 14 June

1887 that “almost the whole of the [Renton] team were employed in the Messrs. Wylie’s works”, and that they typically competed in football “after completing a day’s work”. The papers noted that Vale of Leven FC had a similar background:

Most of the Vale players are in the works of Sir Archibald Orr Ewing, and the Renton team, to a man, I understand, are employed by Messrs. William Stirling & Sons... We would imagine that the stifling and almost poisonous atmosphere of calico work would kill all taste for athletic pursuits. But if we are to judge by the recent history of Renton and other places down that way, such is not the case. (*Scottish Athletic Journal*, 4 October 1887)

Dumbarton footballers, similarly, often represented different occupational groups within the shipbuilding fraternity. In one May 1890 works tournament, one game saw Shipfitters defeat Clerks and Draughtsmen 4-0. Included in the Shipfitters’ team were four members of Dumbarton FC (*Scottish Sport*, 23 May 1890). James McAuley, one of Dumbarton’s most successful players, furthermore managed to temporarily postpone his transfer to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company of Burma – a company in which the Denny family held an operating interest – so that he could play for the club in its February 1887 Scottish Cup final match against Hibernian (*Scottish Umpire*, 8 February 1887).⁵³

One contemporary referred to Renton’s Wylie as the driving force behind football in the region, stating that “he did much to encourage in healthy lines the game of football of which [the Vale of Leven] was for many years the most famous centre”.⁵⁴ Renton FC’s members were able to secure the private Tontine Park “chiefly through the liberality of Mr A Wylie, who had been the club’s hon. President since its formation” (*SAJ*, 7 February 1888). Dumbarton FC, as well, had tight connections with both the Denny family and Dumbarton’s civic body politic. Different members of the Denny firm were patrons of the club, most notably William Denny, partner and grandson of the company founder, and later his brother Peter Denny Jr.⁵⁵ The June 1886 annual general meeting of

the Dumbarton FC, aside from the honorary president William Denny, featured the club president, pharmacist John Babbie, the town's Conservative provost (*DH*, 16 June 1886; *LH*, 10 June 1916). Alexander McAusland Kennedy, the club vice president – also at this meeting – was a naval architect and later assistant manager of the Archibald McMillan & Son shipyard; he would later become the managing director of the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company in 1916 (*SAJ*, 22 September 1885; *SS*, 11 March 1890).⁵⁶ Meanwhile, with Vale of Leven FC, William Ewing Gilmour, the Orr-Ewings' nephew and partner in their calico business, and a keen patron of workers' recreational facilities, was seen at club functions (*The Bailie*, 15 May 1889).⁵⁷

Like another of Britain's paternalist industrialists, Coventry's Albert Herbert, historians have the benefit of Wylie's words on recreation.⁵⁸ By 1884, as far as recreation was concerned, Wylie believed British workers never had it so good: recent reforms, he stated, had granted an average of twenty-one hours per week of leisure time amongst workers.⁵⁹ His projects outside sport included the building of a literary society, a mechanics' institute, and a seat on the Cardross school board.⁶⁰ Rational recreation was very much at the heart of Wylie's reforming mission, as alcohol, which he blamed for retarding production in his factories, was only a small component of the working man's misdirected leisure interests, including 'the sensational dramas, burlesques, and obscene dances of the stage, the excitement and gambling of the racecourse, and vicious amusements to which it is not necessary to mention.'⁶¹ Wylie saw workers' sport as a means of self-improvement. In his speech to the clerks, he offered his definition of recreation, and how he saw it as benefiting man:

What is recreation? It is the pleasant, grateful rest of our tired but not over-fatigued bodies, with the active, delightful exercise of our fresh faculties. Recreation of the proper sort, following moderate work, helps to make a complete man inasmuch as it brings into play, and develops those faculties that would otherwise remain dormant...⁶²

Wylie believed that recreation had a higher purpose, and not just a physical one.⁶³ He was a firm believer in amateurism “for the encouragement of that manly, brave, thoroughly fair and gentlemanly demeanour in their games which has characterised the youth of many of our public schools”.⁶⁴ His passionate belief in “muscular Christianity” was confirmed by Donald Macleod, whose 1891 book *Historic Families, Notable People, and Memorabilia, of the Lennox* featured a generous dedication to Wylie for his social improvement efforts. Wylie, Macleod stated, was “a great advocate of muscular Christianity”.⁶⁵

Similarly in Dumbarton, the Dennys also provided significant provision for recreation.⁶⁶ Initially, it was William Denny – who committed suicide in 1887, aged 40, after the failure of the Denny-owned La Platense Flotilla Company – who was most passionate about sport.⁶⁷ When defending football against charges that it was too rough a game, he used the uniquely muscular Christian language of “manliness”, defined as “a readiness to meet any emergency frankly and courageously”, to emphasise its importance. His biographer, Alexander Balmain Bruce, stated that:

[William Denny] did not share the timidity common among religious people, especially in Scotland, which makes them fight shy of nearly all energetic forms of recreation and practically assume an attitude of prohibition towards the playful or kitten element in human life.⁶⁸

There was another side to William’s appreciation for recreation: Bruce likened his adoption of football as a management strategy for dealing with a different class of people: “no one could make way with the class he belonged to unless he were as a miner among miners, entering into their ways as far as possible”.⁶⁹ But Bruce stated employers such as William Denny were playing their part in moulding football’s moral message, a game that many thought was too rough and dangerous.⁷⁰ William was not the only member of his family to support football, or its potential usefulness in employee relations. In 1890, Peter Denny Jr. became honorary patron of Dumbarton FC (SS, 7 March 1890).⁷¹ John Denny, MP for the Kilmarnock Burghs and brother of William and

Peter Jr., made a speech in November 1895 which echoed Wylie in its criticism of trade unionism, while at the same time castigating other employers for failing to take proper “care” of their workers: “not a patronising interest”, he stated, “not a mere subscribing to their schemes, their football, cricket, and other clubs – but an active interest in their pleasures and their sorrows” (*DH*, 6 November 1895).

The presence of a strong Volunteer movement, heavily encouraged by local employers, contributed to a robust leisure culture in west Dunbartonshire.⁷² Many supporters of the Volunteer Force certainly held aspirations of social control, and many industrialists bought into the robust social and physical programme of citizen soldiering in the hope of building loyalty and unity amongst employees.⁷³ Whatever message was being transmitted by the employers, however, Volunteerism’s popularity amongst workers stemmed from its offering recreation pursuits to the working class that were otherwise unavailable.⁷⁴ Volunteerism was Wylie’s favourite “social physical exercise”, and he believed that football provided a similar service to the Volunteer Force. “It is hardy games like this”, he stated, “which give that warlike spirit and vigour to our army of volunteer soldiers which is the wonder of all the nations who have to recruit their regiments by means of enforced conscription.”⁷⁵ The Vale’s major calico works each raised a separate company in the 1st Dunbartonshire Rifle Volunteers (DRV), with owners serving as commanding officers, and company officials taking commissions.⁷⁶

The attitude towards Volunteerism was similar in Dumbarton: John Denny was said to be “strongly in favour of universal military service, and believes it would benefit the idle and undisciplined of all classes”.⁷⁷ In an article written for Kilmarnock periodical *St. Marnock* in February 1899, Col. Denny emphasised Volunteerism’s physical and moral connotations. “In addition”, he stated, “no one can deny that much enjoyment can be found in the intercourse of the Drill Halls and Reading Rooms, in the shooting at the Ranges and in Camp Life” (125-26). The intimate

connection between Dumbarton FC, the Dennys and the 1st DRV was displayed at a grand civic banquet dedicated to the football club in September 1883, where William Denny saluted the club president from the previous year, Mr. [Alexander] Lawrance – “he was better known to [John Denny] as Sergeant Lawrance” (*DH*, 5 September 1883). Lawrance worked in the Denny yards as a foreman (*DH*, 14 November 1883). At the time, he was famous in the sporting world as a marksman and winner of the Queen’s Prize, but would later become the first president of the SFL in 1890.⁷⁸

Professional football

There is no accurate measurement for determining the relative “successes” or “failures” of industrial sporting paternalism.⁷⁹ “Resistance” to Dunbartonshire employers’ ideas on sport, at least in terms of direct action, is therefore difficult to quantify. But, as Holt observes, paternalist elites had a paradoxical role to play in helping to fuel professional football by giving their charges access to sport, whilst their workers ignored the moral improvement aspects of their patronage.⁸⁰ It was professionalism that presented local employers with the starkest challenge to their particular sporting ethos, encouraging as it did a form of social mobility that emphatically rejected their “muscular Christian” ambitions for their workers. Knox believes that one of industrial paternalism’s major weaknesses as a management strategy was its reliance upon wages, rather than an established landed tradition, as the baseline for inculcating loyalty. This was a major problem in industries which were prone to sharp reversals of fortunes.⁸¹ As far as the region was concerned, Docherty states that newly-arrived migrants to Dunbartonshire were “prepared to move” in search of better opportunities.⁸² Vis-à-vis England in 1860, Scottish wages were often 20% lower than within comparative trades.⁸³ As regards the early years of association football in Dunbartonshire, these factors combined to form a perfect storm: the inherent instability in the industrial economy existed parallel to the rise of association football as a spectator and professional sport.⁸⁴ Many

Dunbartonshire players headed south for work with football clubs, while the Vale of Leven's clubs were amongst those who attempted to become professional within Scotland.

Clubs in the early SFL era were seldom interested in turning profits.⁸⁵ Dunbartonshire's clubs, in fact, served as one of the first cautionary tales in football's financing. The rising tide of professionalism and league football, by 1890, was beginning to bite the village teams hard. Renton FC provides an excellent example of clubs unable to adapt to the initiation of the SFL. The club's management was twice caught subverting the SFA's professional ban in 1890 (not lifted until 1893), the second time resulting in Renton's expulsion from the SFL's inaugural campaign.⁸⁶ Renton won the battle for professionalism, but lost the war, for it and several other clubs – most notably Vale of Leven, which became insolvent in 1895 with debts of £500 – badly miscalculated the economics of the professional game.⁸⁷ The village, with a small, largely working-class population, did not have the capital for a professional football club. Renton permanently crashed out of the SFL in 1898.⁸⁸ But some contemporary sources did not merely attribute these clubs' failures to reckless spending: some blamed inequitable SFL rules which denied clubs hosting football matches a fair share of their profits, a large problem for clubs from towns and villages with smaller populations.⁸⁹

Dunbartonshire's employers' reactions to professionalism in sport were overwhelmingly negative. While chairing the annual Vale of Leven FC "festival" in March 1890, Gilmour took a definitive position against professionalism in football. Citing some fictive history to support his claims, he "contrasted the game of the ancient Greeks with those of the present day, and pointed out that the contestants in the former strove harder for the honour of being victors than the paid athletes of these days did" (SS, 18 March 1890). Another dismissive remark was made by Wylie that same year in his speech to the clerks, whereby he criticised ex-Renton footballers who left for England to become professionals, believing that "sport when pursued as an occupation, and not within the strict bounds of moderate recreation, has a generally deteriorating effect".⁹⁰ John Ward,

managing partner of the Denny firm, at one local Dumbarton football gathering in February 1889 blamed (by implication) the Vale's employers for failing to live up to their duties, for they "were lacking in leaving their teams to do as they chose" (*Scottish Referee*, 18 February 1889).⁹¹ With the recriminations well under way, and their employees utilising football for something other than moral purposes, employers cut their losses. Wylie was nowhere to be seen when Renton needed a bailout, and Peter Denny Jr.'s obituary stated that once Dumbarton FC belatedly went professional, he severed his ties with the club.⁹² This fits the pattern exemplified by West Ham United, with Arnold Hills leaving behind the club that he helped found once it decided to go professional.⁹³

The local papers indeed viewed Renton's 1890 challenge against the SFL's expulsion as an act of rebellion: the *Lennox Herald's* "Wanderer" likened Renton's campaign to facing down would-be oppressors. In his minds, they were pioneers for challenging the absurdity of the SFA in continuing an unsustainable policy: "[T]hey have shown a great deal of pluck, and their action will force the hand of the Association... The Renton Club's action is in the direction of a little independence to clubs, and will be approved by those who hate despotism" (*LH*, 4 October 1890). This was borne not just of rebellion, but also of desperation: a month later, the *Dumbarton Herald* noted that Renton's Brown and Campbell had left for Aston Villa, Gow for Blackburn Rovers, and McNair for Middlesbrough, adding ruefully: "This is the entire defence of Renton in the football line" (*DH*, 5 November 1890). Professionalism, then, offered a possible means of escape for working-class footballers, but via a route that decidedly left local clubs at a distinct disadvantage when fighting for players against Glasgow's and England's big clubs.

Irish Catholic migrants and their descendents, existing as they did outwith the associational circles of Protestant workers, had less to lose if considering a professional career in football. Being based in the locale which housed the greatest proportion of the region's Irish migrants, Renton contained its share of Catholic and Irish players. The club was deeply hurt by the formation of

Celtic, which successfully poached James Kelly and Neil McCallum from Renton's ranks in 1888.⁹⁴ A £1, 10s professional wage awaited Kelly at Celtic, and he was given the opportunity to eventually purchase a public house.⁹⁵ (Kelly would later become influential in the ILP, Irish nationalism and union organising within Glasgow and Lanarkshire.⁹⁶) There were many more who were prepared to move further afield. Sunderland and Liverpool, two of the most successful English clubs of the 1890s, were heavily comprised of Scots.⁹⁷ These clubs attracted Dunbartonshire footballers, including members of the Hannah family. David Hannah played for both. Born in Raffrey, County Down in 1867, he moved to Renton as a child, and gained employment in Wylie's works aged thirteen.⁹⁸ Some went further afield than England: the aforementioned John Madden, after moving onto Celtic, migrated to Prague, managing Czech titans Slavia from 1905 to 1930.⁹⁹ Madden amongst others, was part of a generation of Scots who became some of the first "managers" of football clubs.¹⁰⁰

Another one of them was former Renton man Robert Campbell, the honorary secretary of Sunderland during the mid-1890s. In March 1896, Campbell wrote a newspaper piece entitled "Football: Physical, Social and Moral Aspects". In some passages of his piece, he hinted at an element of personal experience, particularly when discussing the opportunities that the game afforded the industrial working class:

To prove that football is frequently the means of elevating a player's position I need go no further than our own town [Sunderland] where we have a player established in a flourishing business. The importation of Scotsmen to play football in England has been the means of many a young man getting a fresh start in life, and in many instances may be mentioned to prove that football from the social aspect has established many a young man in a lucrative and honourable position. (*DH*, 24 March 1896)

Wylie, needless to say, would not have approved of this method of social mobility. Professional football, then, offered a chance to escape an unequal and institutionally discriminatory work culture where trade unionism initially foundered. Effectively, the sport was essentially used for the opposite purpose its patrons had initially intended. The region's clubs were ironic victims.

Conclusion

The move towards professionalism in the early years of association football was a pragmatic move made by many local clubs, including Dunbartonshire's. It was seemingly made not to attract talent to the county, but to keep it from migrating away. Yet the growth of professionalism, in both Scotland and England, allowed for social mobility amongst tradesmen and labourers, with working-class Scots and Irish migrants being able to move for better opportunities. What they left behind was a highly-divided, highly paternalistic work regime that saw football used as a very different means of social mobility, one which reinforced the social order. More research must be done on sport in regional contexts such as these to gain a more accurate sample of local reactions to sport's popularity. Based on the evidence in this article, however, football's professionalism was used both as a critique of employers' attempts to attach meanings to working-class culture, and also a method of escaping a cycle of low pay and maltreatment that came with the region's industry. What the divisions of the west of Scotland's workplace reveal, however, is that this response was hardly unified and highly contradictory, so much so that even as professionalism represented the antithesis of employers' uses of sport, these industrialists still saw fit to attempt to associate with the sport itself.

Notes

¹ Bairner, "Football", 87-104.

² Recent work on this topic includes McDowell, "Football", 405-25.

³ Murray, *Old Firm*; Idem., *Glasgow's Giants*; Idem., *Bhoys*; Bradley, *Identity*; Walker, "'Glasgow Rangers'", 137-59; Finn, "Racism I", 70-93; Idem., "Racism II", 370-97.

⁴ Keevins and McCarra, *100 Cups*, 15-40, 228-31; Crampsey, "'King Football'", 182-202; Idem., *Scottish Football League*, 279; Harvie, "State", 53. Harvie refers to the Vale of Leven as "the cradle of Scots soccer".

⁵ MacLennan, 'Shinty', 211-28.

⁶ Neill, *Bonhill Parish*, 188-89.

⁷ A newspaper account of the game is given in Weir, *Boys*, 3.

⁸ There has been a great deal of debate in recent years on pre-1860 codes of football, and the early years of QP. On the "origins" debate, see Tranter, "First Football Club?", 104-07; Hutchinson, "Nineteenth-century Edinburgh", 547-65; Hay, "Two Footballs", 952-69; Harvey, *Commercial Sporting Culture*; Swain., "Cultural Continuity", 382-400. On QP see: Mitchell, *First Elevens*; Crampsey, *Game*, 5, 7, 13-17; Robinson, *Queen's Park*, 8-12, 327.

⁹ McAllister, *Sons*, 1-2.

¹⁰ Hutchinson, *Camanachd!*, 107-08.

¹¹ Neill, *Bonhill Parish*, 188-89.

¹² McDowell, "Football", 407-11; Tranter, "Cappielow", 125-40.

¹³ Docherty, "Vale of Leven", 9-11.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9-12; Rawlinson and Robinson, "Turkey Red strike", 186-211.

¹⁵ Docherty, "Vale of Leven", 15-17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15-17; Finlay, "West Dunbartonshire", 72-73.

¹⁷ University of Glasgow Library (GUL), *Census of Scotland* – 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901.

¹⁸ Docherty, "Vale of Leven" 238, 246, 318-34.

¹⁹ Macintyre, *Moscows*, 79-111 Gallacher, "Vale", 186-213; Rawlinson and Robinson, "Turkey Red strike"; 186-211.

²⁰ Knox, *Industrial Nation*; Macdonald, *Radical Thread*; Campbell, *Scottish Miners*.

²¹ Kenefick, *Red Scotland!*; Maver, "Associational Life"; Mackenzie, "Self-Help and Propaganda"; Siméon, "New Lanark".

For a review on the current state of modern Scotland's historiography, see Morton and Griffiths, "Gilded Cage".

²² McDowell, "Football", 411-18; McDowell, *Cultural History*, 87-172.

²³ Tranter, "Chronology II", 370; Metcalfe, "Northumberland", 270-81.

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- ²⁴ Glasgow University Archive Service (GUAS), UGD 13/1, Records of the United Turkey Red Co. Ltd.; UGD 13/3 Records of William Stirling and Sons, UGD 13/3.
- ²⁵ Gillen, *Morton*.
- ²⁶ Campbell, *Scottish Miners*, 256-69, 343-44; Maver, "Associational Life", 513-16.
- ²⁷ Melling, "Class Relations", 69-104; Hutchison, "Working-class Politics", 126-30.
- ²⁸ Duncan, *The Mineworkers*, 139.
- ²⁹ Gallacher, "Vale", 187; Rawlinson and Robinson, "Turkey Red strike"; 178-80; Macintyre, *Moscows*, 79-111.
- ³⁰ Rawlinson and Robinson, "Turkey Red strike", 17; Melling, "Class Relations", 71.
- ³¹ Macintyre, *Moscows*, 85-86.
- ³² Gallacher, "Vale", 195.
- ³³ Craig, *BPER, 1832-1885*, 582; Craig, *BPER, 1885-1918*, 513.
- ³⁴ Macdonald, *Radical Thread*, 74-149.
- ³⁵ Kenefick, *Red Scotland!*, 13-21.
- ³⁶ Tranter, *Sport*, 40-41; Tranter, "Structure", 301-04; Bilsborough, "Development", 243-81; Finn, "Racism I", 80-83.
- ³⁷ McAllister, *Sons*, 22-23.
- ³⁸ Finlay, "West Dunbartonshire", 79.
- ³⁹ Macdonald, *Radical Thread*, 36-72.
- ⁴⁰ McDowell, "Football", 414-18.
- ⁴¹ Hutchison, "Working Class Politics", 98-141; Melling, "Class Relations", 69-104.
- ⁴² Finlay, "West Dunbartonshire", 77-78.
- ⁴³ Craig, *BPER, 1885-1918*, 513.
- ⁴⁴ Korr, "West Ham", 211-32.
- ⁴⁵ Knox, *Industrial Nation*, 94-103.
- ⁴⁶ Hay, "Social Control", 223-47; Tranter, *Sport*, 32-51.
- ⁴⁷ Wylie, *Labour*, 37.
- ⁴⁸ Siméon, "New Lanark", 183-200.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.; Donnachie, *Robert Owen*, 113-32; Campbell, *Scotland since 1707*, 164-66.
- ⁵⁰ Wylie, *Labour*, 182-83, 230; Macintyre, *Moscows*, 83, 188.

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- ⁵¹ Wylie, *Labour*, ix.
- ⁵² Wylie, *Recreation*, 3-4, 10-11.
- ⁵³ Slaven, "Peter Denny"; McAllister, *Sons*, 19.
- ⁵⁴ Eyre-Todd, *Who's Who*, <http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/eyrwho/eyrwho1831.htm>, (accessed 10 August 2013).
- ⁵⁵ Anon., *Peter Denny*, 9.
- ⁵⁶ Anon., "Sir Alexander Kennedy", The Glasgow Story, <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/image.php?inum=TGSA05166> (accessed 10 August 2013).
- ⁵⁷ Macleod, *Families*, 117-24.
- ⁵⁸ Gilchrist, "Shadow", 3-26.
- ⁵⁹ Wylie, *Labour*, 48-50, 53-5, 130.
- ⁶⁰ Macintyre, *Moscows*, 82-83.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 113, 128.
- ⁶² Wylie, *Recreation*, 3-4.
- ⁶³ Wylie, *Labour*, 72.
- ⁶⁴ Wylie, *Recreation*, 10-11; Mangan, *Athleticism*.
- ⁶⁵ Macleod, *Families*, 23.
- ⁶⁶ MacPhail, *Dunbartonshire*, 92.
- ⁶⁷ Moss, "Denny, Peter".
- ⁶⁸ Bruce, *William Denny*, 246.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.
- ⁷¹ Anon., *Peter Denny*, 9.
- ⁷² Harvie, "State", 53.
- ⁷³ Cunningham, *Volunteer Force*, 11, 112-13, 118-19.
- ⁷⁴ Jackson, "Patriotism or pleasure?", 125-39.
- ⁷⁵ Wylie, *Labour*, 9; *Idem.*, *Recreation*, 10.
- ⁷⁶ Macintyre, *Moscows*, 81-82.
- ⁷⁷ Eyre-Todd, *Who's Who*, <http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/eyrwho/eyrwho0506.htm> (accessed 11 August 2013).

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- ⁷⁸ Crampsey, *100 Years*, 23; Anon., *Book of Football*, 266.
- ⁷⁹ Gilchrist, "Shadow of Industry", 3-26.
- ⁸⁰ Holt, *Sport and the British*, 136-48.
- ⁸¹ Knox, *Industrial Nation*, 106-08.
- ⁸² Docherty, "Vale of Leven", 175.
- ⁸³ Devine, "Paradox", 1-16.
- ⁸⁴ Vamplew, *Pay up*, 62-63, 138-39, 193-94; Mason, *Association Football*, 16-17; Lewis, "Genesis", 21-54.
- ⁸⁵ Vamplew, "gate-money football", 549-67.
- ⁸⁶ Crampsey, *100 Years*, 15-18.
- ⁸⁷ Weir, *Boys*, 76-80.
- ⁸⁸ Crampsey, *100 Years*, 297-98.
- ⁸⁹ Anon., *Book of Football*, 266-67.
- ⁹⁰ Wylie, *Recreation*, 4.
- ⁹¹ Anon., *Peter Denny*.
- ⁹² Anon., *Peter Denny*, 9.
- ⁹³ Korr, "West Ham", 224-26.
- ⁹⁴ Murray, *Old Firm*, 14-15.
- ⁹⁵ Campbell and Woods, *Glory*, 345-46.
- ⁹⁶ Murray, *Old Firm*, 14-15; Harvie, "State", 54; *SR*, 20 June 1898.
- ⁹⁷ Williams, *Red Men*, 42-46.
- ⁹⁸ Dykes and Lamming, *Sunderland*, 179; Lamming, *Liverpool*, 60.
- ⁹⁹ Walvin, *People's Game*, 111; Hugh MacDonald, "In search of Johnny Madden, the man who gave Czech football a Scottish accent", *The Herald*, 2 March 2010.
- ¹⁰⁰ Carter, *Football Manager*, 11-48.

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